

04**01 2023**

Internationalist Notes

Broadsheet of the Internationalist Workers' Group

War in Ukraine: No War but the Class War!

Nearly a year has passed since the war in Ukraine was moved from the level of "frozen" civil war (with 14,000 deaths between 2014 and early 2022) to full-blown imperialist proxy conflict between the US and NATO on the one hand and Russia on the other. In that time the US has reasserted itself, after its humiliating defeat in Afghanistan last year, as the leader of the NATO imperialist alliance in Europe. The US is now effectively setting the agenda for NATO's policy with regards to the war in Ukraine. That policy is one of unconditional support for the Ukrainian state in supplying weapons, loans, and providing political cover for the corrupt Zelensky regime in Kiev, at the same time as they militarize Europe and ramp up the economic warfare against Russia in the form of sanctions. The price is paid in the blood of Ukrainian and Russian workers forcibly conscripted by their ruling classes to kill each other and die for the sake of one or another imperialism, while the working class in the US and across the world foots the bill with higher prices for food, rent, and gas.

Billions in Weapons to Ukraine...

Even before the Russian invasion, the US has for years been building up its influence in Ukraine as a way to assert itself against Russian imperialism. The US had supplied some \$2.5 billion worth of weapons to Ukraine just before the Russian invasion, and it was in fact further American weapons sales to Ukraine totalling \$75 million in 2021 that caused the Russian capitalist class to feel that it had no other option but to invade. Add to that IMF loans since its independence since the 1990s which put Ukraine in the debt of American economic imperialism.

Shipments of weapons by the US to Ukraine rose dramatically after the Russian invasion. In September \$12.9 billion in weapons and other military aid had been sent alone in 2022. Over \$60 billion has been sent over this year for other expenses, but all in the interests of propping up the Ukrainian state so that the country is owned by Western capital. Ukraine is also seeking a \$20 billion IMF loan by the end of the year, which if approved, would only further put Ukrainian workers at the mercy of US capital.

...While Workers Are Made to Pay

All of this aid to Ukraine comes with strings attached. Since the Russian invasion, a flurry of anti-worker legislation has been proposed and ratified in the Ukrainian Rada (legislature). The infamous Law 5371, ratified by Zelensky, turns workers in Ukraine into the indentured servants of US and Western capital. Under this law, collective contracts for workers at firms with under 250 employees are replaced with contracts that workers negotiate with their boss with an individual basis. This affects 70% of workers in Ukraine, opening them up to new levels of precarity and exploitation, as collectively negotiated benefits are scrapped and legal trade union powers in the workplace are revoked. Additional anti-worker laws over the year have legalized zero-hour contracts and removed the obligation for the bosses to pay workers conscripted to fight. Other proposed legislation legalizes a 12-hour workday and allow bosses to fire workers without justification.

This is to say nothing of those workers who are made to pay for the war not in longer hours or lower wages, but their blood. Martial law has been in effect across all of Ukraine since the start of the invasion, all men ages 18-60 are legally barred from leaving the country and mandatory conscription has been introduced. Protest



against the war or conscription is heavily repressed by the police. The official death count for Ukrainian soldiers at the frontlines so far stands at 10,000, however we can assume that the total is substantially higher. Figures for the deaths of Russian soldiers in Ukraine are hard to pinpoint, with Ukrainian or Western state sources giving estimates of between 40,000-80,000. Either way, the frontline is hell for the workers on both sides forced by their ruling classes to fight there, turned into cannon fodder to murder each other with high tech missiles and artillery so that the coal mines in the Donbass can have Russian or Western bosses.

Biden and the US ruling class' strategy when it comes to Ukraine is to fight until the last Ukrainian, and until the last paycheck of workers in the US. No amount of the blood of workers in Ukraine or Russia is too expensive for these ruling class ghouls in either party, nor is there any limit to the ways in which they will make workers in the US and abroad pay for their imperialist wars. Lloyd Austin and other top officials in the US government openly talk about their strategy of 'bleeding Russia dry', which means throwing countless Ukrainian workers into the meatgrinder so that they can slaughter the Russian workers that are forced to do the same by their government.

For workers in the US, we will have to pay for the war too. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said in August that bringing down inflation will require "economic pain". And pain is what workers are feeling. With 10% inflation on food and groceries, gas prices still twice as expensive as two years ago, and rent all but unaffordable for workers, we dread to think of what more the capitalist class has in store for us. Job cuts and layoffs to create a more 'pliable' labor market for the capitalists, so that they can enforce a lowering of wages across the board and extract more profits from our labor. All under the 'friend of the worker' Biden, and the 'progressive' Democratic Party, the same forces now working to undercut strikes, like that of the rail workers. There is nothing 'progressive' about maintaining this system of exploitation, making workers pay for capitalism's wars, and the only friends of the workers are the workers are the workers themselves and their future class political organization. Only a collective, self-organized struggle on the part of our class can make any difference in the class war against our exploitation.

A New Phase of Capitalist Barbarism

War is nothing new to capitalism and already before the war in Ukraine this century had seen countless bloody imperialist wars and civil wars. In these conflicts, as in all imperialist conflicts, workers were lined up on one side or to massacre each other leaving whole societies in ruin

while a small class in charge enriched themselves further. What makes the war in Ukraine different is that it has directly pit two leading imperialist powers against each other in a proxy conflict, the USA and Russia, sharpening imperialist tensions to the point where the current conflict in Ukraine threatens to be a 'dress rehearsal' for a global, generalized imperialist conflict. In other words, a Third World War.

This is to say nothing of China, the rising imperialist power that the US ruling class sees as the real threat to its interests. Biden along with Secretary of State Blinken have continued spouting the anti-Chinese propaganda that unites the US ruling class throughout this war. They take every opportunity to link China to Russia and its failing war in Ukraine, and at think tank and "academic" conferences, Blinken and other running dogs of the state play up China and Russia as enemies numbers 1 and 2. Oiling the machinery of public opinion to get workers to accept whatever sacrifices a war with them will require.

Increasingly, as states struggle to deal with the effects of capitalism's global crisis, there is less and less room for compromise on the 'national interest', and this is what is leading us to a global power struggle between US and Chinese imperialism, each of which try to rope in as many states on their side as possible. It is now a matter not of if, but when, these tensions boil over into a third imperialist world war.

Workers are still being tricked into waving flags, Ukrainian, Russian, American. Caught up in the delusion that 'their' leaders are the only ones interested in peace while the others are the reason for the war. That the ideologies of their states, instead of being superficial justifications for plundering the world's resources by a small class of parasites, actually mean something. That the fatherland or motherland, "democracy" or "anti-fascism" are worth dying for. A cycle that repeats without end until the rulers of states have used up all of the workers that they can use as cannon fodder in their (nuclear, humanity-annihilating) wars, or until those rulers are overthrown internationally by the class that they use as cannon fodder. In reality the only flag that people should be waving is the flag of internationalism, the red flag that unites workers of all countries together around the idea that we shouldn't kill each other and should build a world without the seeds of war.

No War but the Class War

As always with imperialist conflicts, the working class has nothing to gain and everything to lose by 'taking sides' with (or worse, giving their lives for) one of the competing imperialisms. All talk of democracy, peace, or 'anti-fascism' by the US are lies and language used to camouflage the fact that Biden and the rest of the US ruling class want us to fight their wars for them. There is no democracy in Ukraine and there is no democracy in the US or any other country for the working class. All countries are dictatorships of the bourgeoisie.

Workers in Ukraine have no reason to fight Russian workers, nor do workers in the US have any quarrel with workers in China. In all of these places we share the same position of being wage laborers, possessing only our labor-power to sell to the capitalists in order to survive. It is the capitalist classes which rule over and exploit us that try to divide us against each other, so that they can engage in a redivision of the world's resources amongst themselves that threatens annihilating our entire species.

Workers in all countries share the same interests; linking up with each other to get rid of these genocidal parasites, so that we can build a new society without exploitation.

Only the working class can lead the fight against capitalism's crisis and the war it is leading us towards, and we can only accomplish this through our own self-organization. We have to fight against our worsening exploitation through rejecting the state and unions, and instead going for the formation of strike committees, mass assemblies, and workers' councils. These latter are the highest expression of working class self-organization, and the organs through which our class can actually seize and exercise power over society. To get to this point, not only does the working class need to create its own political organization, in the form of its own party, to act as our leadership; we also need a mass workers' movement capable of linking up with workers in all countries on an internationalist basis.

To agitate within the working class for the extension and generalization of the class struggle, and for internationalism, the ICT has launched the No War but the Class War initiative, calling for the formation of local NWBCW committees wherever possible. The initiative is open to all genuine internationalists who align with the following points:

- **Against capitalism, imperialism and all nationalisms. No support for any national capitals, "lesser evils", or states in formation.**
 - **For a society where states, wage-labor, private property, money and production for profit are replaced by a world of freely associated producers.**
- **Against the economic and political attacks that the current war, and the ones to come, will unleash on the working class.**
 - **For the self-organized struggle of the working class, for the formation of independent strike committees, mass assemblies and workers' councils.**
 - **Against oppression and exploitation, for the unity of the working class and the coming together of genuine internationalists.**

Building up the international class movement to win the class war will require a great deal of effort and commitment. But confronted with not only crisis bringing deteriorating living standards but nuclear war itself, capitalism gives us no other choice but to struggle as a class for our own liberation.

Who We Are

The Internationalist Workers' Group is the US affiliate of the Internationalist Communist Tendency.

The IWG stands for a global society where production is for need and not profit (and is therefore sustainable), where the state, national frontiers and money have been abolished, where collective power is exercised through class-wide organizations like workers' councils. This has to mean the active, daily participation of the majority aiming for the interests of all. Only then can the world be rid of the capitalist offspring of poverty, hunger, oppression and war: we call it communism but this vision has nothing in common with Stalinist state capitalism and the old USSR.

In order to get there we are working to create a world working class political organization - a 'party' for want of a better word - not a government in waiting but a guide in the struggle for a new world. We by no means claim to be that party but we do aim to be one of the elements which will need to come together in its formation. As the working class, the majority of the world's population, is more and more faced with the consequences of a crumbling capitalist system, it will have to unite and overthrow the capitalist system and its bloody imperialist appetites.

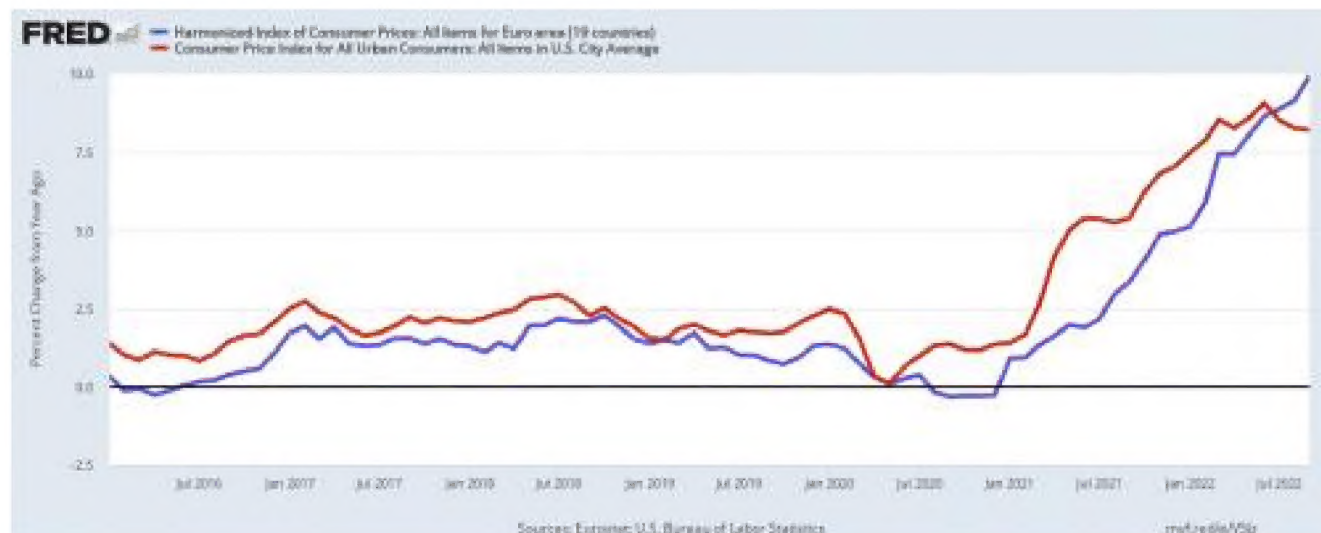
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Internationalist Notes, Volume 1, Number 4. Winter 2023
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Inflation Cuts Workers' Real Wages With No End in Sight



Inflation that was supposed to be "transitory" has been cutting away at workers' real wages for more than a year now. The September inflation report from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics revealed that inflation has predictably continued to rise. Consumer prices increased 0.4% over September, and are 8.2% more expensive than this point last year. Food and shelter continue to get further out of reach for workers in the US; food is 11.2% more expensive than 12 months ago, and prices for shelter increased 6.6% over the same time frame. While energy prices fell overall, energy services prices increased, with electricity and utility gas increasing 0.4% and 2.9% over the last month (15.5% and 33.1% over the last year), respectively. Combined with wages that stay the same or don't keep pace with inflation, we're suffering real pay cuts.

Despite being hailed as a "progressive" and a "new FDR" by ruling class apologists in the media, Biden's administration has been nothing but austerity for workers. He came in on promises of raising our wages and expanding access to social welfare programs, promises that he and the rest of the Democratic Party knew that they wouldn't (and couldn't) keep. But instead he and the Democrats went right along with the Republicans in kicking workers off of unemployment benefits over 2021 so that workers, and not the bosses, would pay for "re-opening" of the economy. Proposals like a federal \$15 minimum wage were allowed by Biden and the Democrats to die early on in his administration to teach workers not to expect much. This when it's impossible to afford renting two-bedroom housing on the current \$7.25 federal minimum wage in any state in the US. Meanwhile the child tax credit, which distributed \$250-\$300 to families in poverty over 2021, was allowed to expire by both parties in 2022. Biden and the Democrats with few (purely symbolic) exceptions didn't lift a finger to revive it (to say nothing of the Republican Party which, like the Democratic Party, only uses the "working class" as a cheap rhetorical prop); its expiration immediately thrust millions of children into poverty.

Beyond the economic (systemic) crisis, life has also gotten worse for us with capitalism's pandemic and climate change. Covid continues killing around 500 people a day in the US, adding up to over 3,000 per week. At the beginning of the year the Biden administration cut all funding for Covid prevention. After more than 2 and a half years of the virus, funding for public health continues to take a backseat to missiles for Ukraine. Biden made modest promises at COP26 in Glasgow last year but even these were too large for capitalism to follow through on. US oil drilling permits have continued apace while the Biden administration demands that OPEC also increase oil production (a result of inter-imperialist conflict between Russia and NATO). The acolytes of the Democratic Party parade the token climate measures in the Inflation Reduction Act as proof that the system can act on climate change, but the only thing it proves is that they don't understand the seriousness of the issue and the billions of lives at stake this century.

Funding for fighting against climate change also takes a backseat. Biden made modest promises at COP26 in Glasgow last year but even these were too large for

capitalism to follow through on. US oil drilling permits have continued apace while the Biden administration demands that OPEC also increase oil production (a result of inter-imperialist conflict between Russia and NATO). The acolytes of the Democratic Party parade the token climate measures in the Inflation Reduction Act as proof that the system can act on climate change, but the only thing it proves is that they don't understand the seriousness of the issue and the billions of lives at stake this century.

If you listen to the mouthpieces of Biden and the Democratic Party on MSNBC and elsewhere, the reason that workers in the US are having it so rough lately is because of Russia's war in Ukraine. True, the war in Ukraine has intensified capitalism's global crisis, in particular driving up prices of energy and food due to oil and natural gas exported from Russia and grain exported from both countries having a harder time reaching the global market. But this doesn't explain why oil, gas and food prices were rising in the US and world since well before the invasion. And rather than being the central cause of inflation, the war in Ukraine was an outgrowth of the system's crisis (including inflation), which inevitably leads to inter-imperialist war as states have less and less room for compromise with each other. For the bourgeois mass media aligned with the Democratic Party, blaming Russia is just an easy way to deflect blame ahead of the midterms, while more importantly garnering support for funding the US' proxy war in Ukraine with tens of billions of dollars.

For the Republican Party on the other hand, soaring inflation and worsening living standards for workers under Biden presents them with an opportunity. They get to blame it all on the current man in the Oval Office, promising workers that if Trump or some other right-wing clown were in office, that these problems would magically disappear. But they also don't have any actual solution for workers, and so rely on demonizing trans people and other oppressed groups to distract from that inconvenient fact.

For Biden and the rest of the ruling class, their solutions are twofold; make us pay for the crisis, and make it harder for us to fight back. Biden's Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell has led the agency in hiking interest rates five times over the last eight months, for a combined total of 3.75%. Their stated aim is engineering a recession, slowing economic growth and raising unemployment, to tame inflation. Workers are going to be even more saddled with debt, lose their jobs, and suffer more cuts in real wages, all in a vain attempt by the capitalist class to resuscitate their decadent system's profit rates. Meanwhile, police budgets are larger than ever under Biden, despite the bourgeois mass media narrative that they've been defunded. And the bosses aren't hesitant to have them deployed any time workers refuse to pay for the bosses' crisis.

Let's call this what it is; class war! And it's time that our class won this war once and for all. The working class has got to struggle for our own self-organization, forming strike committees, mass assemblies and workers' councils, and fight back.